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SUBJECT: DARFUR PEACE PROCESS: UN/AU UPDATE ON THE EVE OF  
PARIS SUMMIT

REF: A. KHARTOUM 00953

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 00960

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) On the eve of the June 25 ministerial summit in Paris, United Nations and African Union representatives in Khartoum provided detailed updates on the Darfur political process. They said that the immediate focus should be on repairing the rift between the Darfur rebels' political and military wings and described a renewed willingness among most of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatories to cooperate with the UN and AU in preparation for negotiations. Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) leader Abdulwahid al-Nur was the exception, and the UN and AU recommended more strident action should he continue to obstruct the peace process. While warning that international attention on a UN peace-keeping force risked overshadowing the equally-important political process, UN and AU representatives urged the international community to press Sudan to cease its support for regional mediation efforts that rivaled the UN/AU lead and to discontinue attempts to conclude separate peace agreements with individual rebel factions in Darfur. The UN and AU are re-evaluating the SPLM's role in the political process following the postponement of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) conference in Southern Sudan. End summary.

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Political/Military Rift in Darfur  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) In a briefing for the Darfur Partners Group of Western ambassadors and in one-on-one meetings with the CDA on June 24, Pekka Haavisto, the senior advisor to UN Envoy Jan Eliasson, and Sam Ibok, head of the AU's Darfur Peace Agreement Implementation Team, provided updates on the Darfur political process and requested specific, coordinated messages from the international community. They said that their immediate focus would be on repairing the rift between Darfur's political leaders and the commanders in the field. The UN and AU were examining the best format to accomplish this goal, which would likely be linked to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue's (CHD) proposed meeting in Kenya for

the factions of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM). They viewed three broad categories of rebel groups at present: the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the new Sudan National Redemption Front (SNRF) emerging from consultations in Asmara, and one to three principal factions of the SLA. Each of the groups had expressed a willingness to work with the UN and AU, with the exception of SLM leader Abdulwahid al-Nur.

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UN/AU Suggest Messages to Sudan  
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13. (SBU) Haavisto and Ibok stated that while Sudan appeared conciliatory it was obstructing the political process. They asked for the international community to reinforce two messages with the Sudanese Government: 1) Cease support for the attempts of regional capitals, particularly Asmara, to mediate the political process and show a sustained commitment to the UN/AU lead as stipulated in the November Addis Ababa agreement and the Tripoli Consensus, and 2) Cease attempts to make individual agreements with rebel leaders in Darfur, which undermines the potential for a comprehensive peace. Ibok said that the international community's focus on a peace-keeping operation for Darfur risked undermining the equally-important political process. "The Government wants to give on the peace-keeping operation and block the political process," he explained.

14. (SBU) Describing a recent meeting with Presidential Advisor Maghzoub al-Khalifa as contentious, Ibok and Haavisto said that al-Khalifa had disputed accusations that Sudan had given a "double mandate" to both the UN/AU and Asmara and that it was "poaching rebel leaders." Haavisto said that al-Khalifa "had clearly been instructed to be cooperative," but this cooperation broke down during more detailed discussions. Al-Khalifa had rejected the possibility of changes to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) and "would not entertain" proposals for re-consolidating Darfur into one region. Despite al-Khalifa's assertions, Ibok was confident

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that the UN/AU could convince him to shift these positions. He also urged the international community to consider other potential interlocutors in the National Congress Party (NCP).

While acknowledging that Director General of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) Salah Ghosh appeared content to allow "confusion to reign" in Darfur for now, Ibok suggested that Ghosh was a "useful resource" who both maintained credibility in the NCP and could deal with the international community.

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Only Minor Adjustments Needed to DPA  
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15. (SBU) The UN and AU underscored that any negotiating process would not involve a fundamental re-tooling of the DPA. Haavisto and Ibok's recent discussions in Darfur had shown that opposition to the DPA was mostly "psychological" and that even the most adamant among the DPA's detractors agreed with "80 percent of the document." "In many cases, the Fur rejected the document because the Zaghawa signed," said Haavisto. "We just need a few new pages that they can show their people, which is much more important than detailed provisions that only experts can understand." The UN/AU described a negotiating process where agreement between the NCP and the DPA non-signatories was reached on most key issues before the start of formal talks. Final status negotiations would then be "short and intensive to close any lingering gaps," according to Haavisto. If the on-again, off-again visit of President Deby to Khartoum occurred, it would be a "reason for optimism" on the political process. The French Ambassador reported, however, that discussions in Tripoli between the Chadian Government and the Chadian opposition were stalled, which could explain the delay in Deby's visit.

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The Abulwahid Factor  
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¶16. (SBU) SLA leader Abdulwahid al-Nur's continued refusal to cooperate with the UN/AU, the SPLM, and CHD was now the principal obstacle to the political process, the UN and AU asserted. In a phone call with Haavisto on June 24, al-Nur refused to attend the upcoming CHD meeting in Kenya. Haavisto had told al-Nur that his commanders in Darfur had "begged" him to communicate with them and that he could visit Sudan with UN/AU security guarantees. Al-Nur had refused this offer. "It is time that serious and frank messages be sent to Abdulwahid," said Haavisto, adding that al-Nur had "been one of the spoilers of the Umm Rai meeting" of rebel commanders in North Darfur in January. Ibok said that he had asked UN Envoy Jan Eliasson to "read Abulwahid the riot act" when he meets with him on the margins of the June 25 Paris summit. Doubting the sincerity of French pressure on al-Nur to be a constructive actor, Haavisto and Ibok urged the international community to reinforce the strong messages from the UN and AU that al-Nur must be a constructive actor in the peace process--or face international condemnation. The UN/AU are finalizing logistical arrangements for al-Nur to meet with his field commanders in Kenya as part of the CHD initiative. If al-Nur failed to attend this meeting, the UN/AU said that the international community should regard this intransigence as a trigger for more strident action. (Note: In a June 23 meeting with the CDA, Senior Assistant to the President Minni Minawi predicted that al-Nur, who he referred to affectionately as "my friend," would never return to Darfur, "even if the NCP made him a vice president." End note.)

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Rise of Fur Nationalism  
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¶17. (SBU) Despite his intransigence, al-Nur's popularity among the Fur continues to rise. CDA Fernandez observed that in some cases the "rebels gain more by doing less" and supported the UN/AU's calls for clear redlines on the political process. According to Abdel Mohammed, the chairman of the preparatory committee for the Darfur Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC), the Fur population in the internally-displaced persons (IDP) camps is "extremely politicized" and consider al-Nur "their virtual leader." He said that the Fur had historically been the least militarized--and thus the most vulnerable--population and had

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suffered the brunt of the conflict. However, the camps were no longer "just for helpless people" but had become a "politicized platform where serious problems were being discussed" and the vanguard of a resurgent Fur nationalism. "I have not seen such energy in Darfur for a long time," said Mohammed. He predicted that a new organization, the Fur Cultural Club, would evolve into a political party, which al-Nur was "following closely." Mohammed attributed some of this politicization to resentment at the influx of foreign Arab populations from other parts of the Sahel. He said that the Minister of the Interior had admitted in front of the National Assembly that 75,000 to 100,000 Arabs from Niger had relocated to Darfur. The Fur population viewed this immigration as the NCP's attempt to bolster its support in preparation for the 2009 elections. The Umma and Communist parties were exploiting the ensuing resentment to create opposition to the census. (Note: In an earlier meeting, Minawi told the CDA that the Umma, Communist, and Democratic Unionist parties were attempting to undermine NCP influence in Darfur by encouraging political agitation in the IDP camps. End note.)

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SPLM Initiative Stalled?  
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¶18. (SBU) The UN and AU characterized the SPLM initiative as in disarray and suffering from internal SPLM political conflicts. According to the UN and AU, the "failure" of the SPLM conference to get off the ground had resulted from a disconnect between the SPLM leadership's goal for the conference--preparing the non-signatories for negotiations--and the SPLM Taskforce on Darfur's (TFD) unwillingness to deviate from a broader meeting that would include elements of civil society, traditional leaders, and Arab tribal representatives. The UN and AU acknowledged, however, that the TFD now blamed them for the delay in the SPLM conference. They maintained that the SPLM must have a prominent role in the political process and that the NCP had "scored a point" with the collapse of the SPLM conference. In a reversal of the UN/AU's previous position, they suggested that the SPLM could work with civil society groups while the UN/AU and CHD concentrated on preparing the non-signatories for negotiations.

¶19. (SBU) The UK Ambassador said "it was odd that the Taskforce could blame the UN and AU," explaining that her impression during the June 15 meeting with First Vice President Salva Kiir was that he delayed the conference because of key Darfur rebel leader's refusal to attend (Ref. A). Having just returned from Juba, where she had met with Kiir, the UK Ambassador said she had the impression that the SPLM initiative was "deadlocked." Kiir had told her that even Darfur rebel leader Ahmed Abdulshafi, a former member of the SPLM who maintains close ties to the movement, had said he would not attend a conference in Southern Sudan until he bolstered his military strength. The UN/AU reported that Abdulshafi had felt that the SPLM initiative was unclear and did not add anything to the process. The CDA cautioned that work with civil society groups was "easy to do badly," despite its importance. He also noted the absence of independent civil society organizations in Darfur and said that one academic had told him "the Government has castrated us." The CDA encouraged the UN/AU to coordinate closely with the SPLM to define their role. (Note: Per Ref. B, recent Embassy reporting indicates that the SPLM is re-focusing and restructuring its initiative in a renewed effort to focus on preparing the non-signatories for negotiations. End note.)

¶10. (SBU) Tripoli minimize considered.  
FERNANDEZ